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A DISCOURSE

AGAINST PROFANE

Swearing and Cursing,

Wherein

I. Those Vices are describ'd and reprov'd.

II. Both Magistrates and Private Persons are excited to their Duty in order to the Suppressing 'em by the Execution of the late Act of Parliament against 'em.

III. And the Objections commonly rais'd against the present practice of Private Informations are modestly consider'd.

A Discourse concerning Profane Swearing and Cursing.
Imprimatur cui Titulus,
August 2. 1697. Narcissus Dublin.

DUBLIN, Printed for *Matthew Gunn* at the *Bible* and *Crown* in *Essex-Street* near *Essex-Gate*, 1698.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING Prophane SWEARING and CURSING.

I Hope I need not make any long apology for a Diſcourſe on this *ſubject*. Where an Epidemical Diſtemper reigns, no man can be blam'd for his regular endeavours, either to cure the Infected Perſons themſelves, or to ſtop the ſpreading of the fatal Contagion to others. And I fear, as to theſe *Vices* the Infection is too general, and the Diſeaſe too deeply rooted, to render any attempts unneceſſary that are truly conducive to attain the propoſed end. And for the method inſiſted on in this Diſcourſe, I ſhall only ſuggeſt, That I thought it needful firſt to lay open the Nature of theſe *deteſtable Sins* (as the late *Act of Parliament* juſtly calls them); *Partly*, That if poſſible Men's Conviction concerning the abſurdity and folly of e'm, may happily prevent the occaſion of *penal ſeverities* (which how gentle ſoever are never any farther deſirable then they are abſolutely neceſſary). *Partly*, To ſatisfy all unprejudic't perſons that thoſe concern'd in promoting the Execution of this Law, are acted by no other principles then their regular *Zeal* for the honour of *Almighty God*, and their ſincere *Charity* to the *Offenders* themſelves, the generality of whom, 'tis to be feared, are too ſtupid and hardned in their wretched practice to be reaſon'd out of it, and ſeem only capable of this laſt and harſheſt method of Cure.

I ſhall therefore in proſecution of my preſent Deſign treat on theſe 3 general Heads.

I. *I ſhall briefly repreſent the hainous Nature of thoſe two common Vices of the Age, Profane Swearing and Curſing in order to diſſuade men from the practice of them.*

II *I ſhall offer ſomething to excite both Magiſtrates and private perſons to their duty, in order to the ſuppreſſing theſe Vices by the Execution of the Law lately made againſt them.*

III *I ſhall modeſtly examine what ground there is for the loud Complaints lately made againſt Clandeſtine Informations.*

I. *I ſhall briefly repreſent the hainouſneſs of thoſe two common Vices of the Age, Profane Swearing and Curſing in order to diſſuade men from the practice of them.*

And to prepare my way for this, It will be requiſite to premiſe ſome account of the nature of theſe Sins by ſtating the true notions of them. And

Firſt, For the Sin of *Profane Swearing*, We ſhall the more clearly apprehend what it is, if we firſt conſider the nature of an *Oath* in general.

Now an Oath has been defin'd by the Maſters of Heathen Morality, *A Religious affirmation*, or *A calling the Deity to witneſs in a controverted matter.* And it has been defin'd by the generality of Chriſtian Writers to the ſame purpoſe, *An appeal to ſome ſupernatural Power, as the witneſs of the truth of what we affirm or promiſe, and the avenger of our falſhood and perfidiouſneſs if we lye.* And indeed all do agree, that ſuch an Appeal is an Oath in the moſt ſtrict and proper ſenſe.

But this account of an Oath ſeems only to agree to thoſe wherein we ſwear by ſome *real* or *ſuppoſed* Deity, or at leaſt ſome Inhabitant of the inviſible World, that cannot be produc't as a witneſs here on Earth. Whereas men may ſwear by inanimate and inſenſible Creatures themſelves, who are not capable of giving any Teſtimony at all to the truth of what they ſay.

Thus the Heathens were wont to ſwear by the Heavens or the Earth, by the Sun or the Stars, *&c.* The Jews by *Jeruſalem*, the Temple, or the Altar, *&c.* And therefore thoſe who place the nature of an Oath in ſuch an Appeal to a higher witneſs that is

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not producible in human Courts of Judicature, do ſuppoſe that ſuch expreſſions, as by the Heavens, by the Earth, *&c.* are only Oaths in an improper ſenſe, or rather the abuſe of an Oath, being ſenſeleſs appeals to thoſe things as the witneſſes of the truth of what we ſpeak that are not capable of giving any ſuch Teſtimony.

But on the other hand, ſince ſuch expreſſions were accounted *Oaths* in the common judgment of mankind, and our Saviour himſelf mentions them as proper Inſtances of *Swearing*, (See 5. *Matth.* 34, 35, *&c.* compared with 5. *James* 12.) others have rather choſen to give ſuch an extenſive notion of an Oath as may include theſe as proper Inſtances of Swearing, and therefore define an Oath to be, *The pawning ſome ſuppoſed undoubted being as a pledg of the truth of what we ſay, with an implicit imprecation of ſome penalty on our ſelves in caſe we lye.* Thus as when men ſwear by God they pawn his Being & perfections for the truth of what they declare, and in effect wiſh if they lye to be dealt with as thoſe that deny them; ſo when they ſwear by the Heavens or the Earth, by the Sun or Stars, *&c.* The meaning of the Oath is, as ſure as there is a Heaven and Earth, a Sun or Stars, ſo true is what I ſpeak, and if I lye, let me be eſteem'd and dealt with as if I had impudently deny'd the exiſtence of theſe things. So when men ſwear by their Faith or Conſcience, or hope of Salvation, they do in effect pawn theſe for the truth of their aſſertions or promiſes, and in effect wiſh if they lye to be treated as perſons that have renounc't all pretenſions to Faith, to Conſcience, or to the Hope of Salvation. So when Men ſwear by their Head, they make that a kind of pledg of the truth of what they ſpeak, and vertually imprecate ſome miſchief on it in caſe they lye. So that this latter deſcription of an Oath ſeems at firſt ſomewhat different from the former, and more comprehenſive; and indeed if what is call'd ſwearing by Creatures, be in the ſtrict and proper ſenſe an Oath, this ſeems the more clear and accurate account of it.

But yet we may in a great meaſure reconcile theſe two deſcriptions of an Oath, and make 'em of equal extent, if we take what our Saviour ſuggeſts in reference to ſwearing by Creatures in its utmoſt latitude, *viz.* That on the account of that relation they all

ſome way or other bear to God, there is in all ſwearing by Creatures, tho not an expreſs yet an implicit Invocation of God and appeal to him. Thus he charges thoſe that ſwore by the Heavens or the Earth, as vertually and by juſt conſtruction ſwearing by that God, whoſe Throne the one, and whoſe Footſtool the other was. Nay he ſuppoſes thoſe that ſwore by their Head, implicitly to ſwear by that God whoſe workmanſhip it was, ſince we our ſelves cou'd not make one Hair of it black or white, *Matth.* 5. 34,35,36. compar'd with *Matth.* 23. 21, 22. For he ſpeaks this (as Dr. *Petit* in his various Lections well obſerves) in oppoſition to the Jewiſh Doctors, who did not think ſwearing by Creatures to be properly Oaths, nor to have any obligatory vertue. For they thought no Oaths binding but thoſe in which they ſwore by the name of God, (excepting their Oath by the Gold of the Temple and *Corban*, See *Matth.* 23.). And therefore our Lord on the contrary intimates to them, That God himſelf was intereſſed whenever they ſwore by any of his Creatures; For ſince they cou'd bear no proper teſtimony to the truth of their Aſſertions, or Promiſes, The Appeal was implicitly and by juſt interpretation made to him, and he was concern'd to puniſh the falſe Appellant. So that whoever by ſuch Swearing pawns any of Gods Creatures for the Truth of his Words, do's vertually call their Maker to be his Witneſs, and engage him to avenge the Indignity offer'd to his own works, when they are abuſed to countenance our lying and falſhood. It is not therefore of any great moment as to our practice whether of theſe two notions of an Oath we preſer and follow.

Having thus ſtated the general Notion of an *Oath*, we may more eaſily determine what profane Swearing is.

There is ſome *Swearing* in it *ſelf* ſinful and profane, and can never be lawfully uſed on any occaſion, As the *ſwearing by a falſe God*; becauſe ſuch an Oath attributes the perfections of the only true God to a contemptible *Idol*, which is a high degree of *Blaſphemy*.

But on the other hand, our *Swearing by the true God*, is either *lawful* and *good*, or *ſinful* and *profane*, according to the circumſtances wherein that action is uſed.

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To *ſwear by the Bleſſed God*, is ſo far from being in its own nature an *evil* or *impious* action, that on the contrary when uſed on juſt and neceſſary occaſions, 'tis an action highly conducive to the honour of God, and to the publick Good. 'Tis an action *highly conducive to the honour of God*, whoſe glorious perfections are openly acknowledged in thoſe ſolemn regular Appeals we make to him, in ſuch important caſes wherein there is no other way left to confirm the truth of what we ſpeak. And in ſuch caſes the Jews were by the Law of *Moſes* not only *permitted* but *requir'd to ſwear by the Name of God, Deut.* 6. 13. That being one Branch of the Religious Worſhip due to him. Nay 'tis an action no leſs *conducive to the publick good.* It being one of the moſt proper and effectual means to end ſtrifes and controverſies among Men, by confirming the truth of what they ſpeak, *Heb.* 6. 13. For ſince in ſo manifold caſes we muſt depend on human Teſtimonies for finding out Truth, we can have no greater aſſurance that men ſpeak truly, then when they ſolemnly appeal to God as the Witneſs of it, and their dreadful Avenger if they lye. For 'tis reaſonably ſuppoſed that if any thing can oblige Men to a ſtrict regard to Truth, in what they deliberately affirm, this awful Bond will. And Charity prompts us to hope that there are but few whoſe Conſciences are ſo ſear'd as to have no reverence for an Oath, and no dread of God's terrible Vengeance againſt thoſe that by Perjury abuſe his ſacred Name to the ſupport of known falſhood.

And accordingly the Holy Scriptures abound with the Examples of *good* men's *ſwearing* on ſuch ſolemn occaſions. The inſtances in the *Old Teſtament* are numerous. Nay, even the *New Teſtament* contains frequent Examples of this kind, even after the ſtrict general prohibition of our Saviour, *Swear not at all.* For learned Criticks have made it evident, That our *Saviour* himſelf did thus *ſwear* when *adjur'd* by the High Prieſt, *Matth.* 26. 62,63,64. compar'd with *Lev.* 5. 1. And there is no pretence to doubt of this being ſeveral times practiſed by the Apoſtle *Paul* in his Epiſtles. See 2 *Cor.* 11. 31. 1 *Rom.* 9. 1 *Gal.* 20. 2 *Cor.* 1. 23. 1 *Theſ.* 5. 27. And as the *Quakers* are the only people that pretend to deny the lawfulneſs of *ſwearing*, by interpreting our Saviours pro-

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hibition in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, ſo I do not ſee that they are herein conſiſtent with themſelves For they do themſelves frequently make ſolemn Appeals to God for the Truth of what they ſay; as *Barclay* himſelf tells us, They are wont on ſolemn occaſions to ſay, *We ſpeak the Truth in the fear of God and before him, who is our Witneſs and the ſearcher of our hearts.* * He dos indeed deny this to be an *Oath*, (as he dos the forementioned Expreſſions of the Apoſtle *Paul*) but I take his denyal to be contrary to the common ſenſe of mankind concerning the nature and import of an *Oath*. So that 'tis rather the *name* of an *Oath*, and the *circumſtances* of Swearing uſed among us, that they ſeem to boggle at then the *thing* it ſelf.

* *See his Works in Fol p.* 553.

Nor is *Swearing by Creatures* on ſuch occaſions *unlawful* in it *ſelf*, when the *Creature* is only named in ſubordination to *God*, ſo that the Appeal it ſelf is evidently intended and directed to him. Thus we read of *Moſes* calling the *Heaven and Earth to record* againſt the *Iſraelites*, that he had ſet before e'm life and death, *Deut.* 30. 19, 21, 28. So *Hannah* ſwears to *Ely*, *As thy Soul liveth, my Lord, I am the Woman that ſtood by thee here, praying to the Lord.* 1 Sam. 20. 3.— So *Abigail*, 1 *Sam.* 20. 26.— So *Uriah*, 2 *Sam.* 11. 11.— So in our common Form of Swearing we uſe theſe Words, *So help me God, and the Contents of this Book.* So it has been uſual with good men in order to their vindication from groſs publick Calumnies, to call *God, Angels, and Men*, to atteſt the Truth of what they offer in their own defence.

Now that *Swearing* (by *God* or his *Creatures*) which is in its ſelf *lawful*, when uſed in a *ſolemn* manner on ſo *important* occaſions, degenerates into *ſinful* or *profane Swearing*, when 'tis us'd in our *ordinary Converſe* without any ſuch due *ſeriouſneſs* and *ſolemnity* or any *juſt occaſion* that ſhou'd render it needful to attain the forementioned ends. For as *ſacred* things are ſaid to be *profan'd* when they are *irreverently* manag'd and proſtituted to any *mean* or *vile* uſe, ſo is an *Oath profan'd*, when we treat this awful act of Religious Worſhip with ſo little *reſpect*, as to proſtitute it to *common* and *mean* purpoſes, in atteſting our ordinary Diſcourſe; whereas it ſhou'd

ſhou'd never be us'd but where there is apparent need of it to confirm ſome doubted Truth that muſt be determin'd by human Teſtimony. And the more expreſsly the Name of God himſelf is Invocated in ſuch Oaths, the profaneneſs of them is more evident and unconteſtable. For 'tis a manifeſt Indignity to that High and Glorious Being that his Sacred *Name* ſhou'd be thus interpos'd, and raſh *Appeals* made to him upon every *frivolous* occaſion, meerly to vent our irregular heat, or to give credit to every trifling Aſſertion in our common Converſation. Nay even when we do not make any explicit Appeal to God, 'tis yet a real *pollution* of his glorious and adorable Name, when we raſhly toſs it in our Mouths for no other purpoſe then to ſignify ſome fooliſh Wonder, or expreſs ſome idle Paſſion, or applaud ſome vain Jeſt. Thus, O Lord, and O God, are common in the Mouths of many when they ſerve to no other end, but to fill up an empty gap in their ordinary Diſcourſe.

Secondly, For the ſin of *profane Curſing*, the notion of it is more plain and obvious.

'Tis indeed true that if we take *Curſing* in a large ſenſe we cannot abſolutely condemn it as ſinful; For

1. If we give the Name of *Curſes* to all thoſe *Denunciations of the Vengeance of God againſt Sinners which are utter'd by a prophetick Spirit*, There is no doubt of the lawfulneſs of ſuch Curſes.

And indeed 'tis highly probable that many of thoſe expreſſions which occur in the Pſalms, and which our Tranſlation makes to be Imprecations are no other then predictions of thoſe Evils to the Churches Enemies which the Spirit of God dictated to the Inſpired Penmen. And the Original dos much favour this ſuppoſition; thoſe expreſſions being uſually not in the Imperative Mood, but in the Future Tenſe of the Indicative, and may be more properly rendred, *Mine Enemies ſhall be confounded*, then, *let them be ſo.*

2. All *Curſing* is not *Unlawful*, that dos imply *the wiſhing ſome kind of Evil to others.*

For doubtleſs we may in reference to the Enemies of the true Religion, and indeed to all wicked and miſchievous perſons, without the leaſt violation of the great Law of Charity, wiſh *diſappointment*

Pointment in their pernicious Deſigns and Enterprizes, and the *ſhame* and *confuſion* that ſuch fruſtration of their attemps will occaſion. Nay in any caſe of publick Conteſts wherein the intereſt of true Religion or of important civil Right is concern'd, we may lawfully wiſh and pray for ſucceſs to thoſe who eſpouſe the juſt and righteous ſide of the Cauſe, againſt thoſe that wou'd either ſubvert the true Religion or invade and oppreſs the civil Rights of others. Nay this ſeems conſiſtent with Charity, whether ſuch Perſecutors and Oppreſſors be ſuppoſed incorrigible or not. For if *incorrigible*, their overthrow is a very deſirable publick Bleſſing. And if *corrigible*, their ill ſucceſs is the moſt likely means to convince and reform e'm, as their proſperous one would be to harden e'm.

And to the one or other of theſe Heads, we may reduce all thoſe Imprecations againſt their Enemies that the Penmen of the *Pſalms* uſe, without ſuppoſing any thing in e'm contrary to the meek and forgiving diſpoſition which the Law of Chriſt ſo poſitively enjoyns.

There are indeed ſome *Curſes* us'd by good men in Scripture that do not belong to theſe Heads. Such as thoſe of *Job* and of *Jeremy* chiefly level'd againſt the *day of their birth*, *Job.* 3. *Jer.* 20. But then I think we are under no obligation to juſtify them. They ſeem rather mention'd for our caution as inſtances of human infirmity, of too great impatience and diſcontent under the preſſure of their preſent afflictions.

The *Curſing* then which the Scriptures condemn (and which this Act of Parliament refers to) implies ſuch *raſh Wiſhes of Evil to others or our ſelves which we utter either in our paſſion or from a Spirit of malice and revenge, or from a meer pleaſure in ſuch helliſh Language.*

And it falls under the notion of *profane Curſing*, as we either directly and expreſsly, or by juſt conſtruction ſollicit the Vengeance of God for the infliction of ſuch miſchiefs on others or our ſelves. And the greater the miſchiefs are which we thus raſhly imprecate, and the more eminently the Juſtice of God is concern'd in the execution of e'm, the higher is the degree of *profaneneſs*. So that the

the common Expreſſions which Curſers now uſe, when they call on God to *damn themſelves* or *others*, contain the moſt horrid guilt that this Sin can eaſily admit of. And truly that other phraſe falls little ſhort of it, by which Men ſo often give *themſelves* or *others* to the *Devil*, who is conſider'd in ſuch wretched Imprecations as the Executioner of Divine Juſtice.

Having ſtated the general notion of profane Swearing and Curſing, I come now to offer a few Arguments to diſſuade men from the practice of them.

And thoſe ſhall be drawn, from the *Expreſs prohibition of theſe Sins*, from the *intrinſick Evil and pernicious tendency of them*, from the *Threatnings of God denounc't againſt them*, and from the *weakneſs and folly of the pretences alledg'd to excuſe or extenuate them.*

Firſt I begin with the *expreſs prohibition of theſe Vices.*

Thus for *common Swearing*, that this is prohibited by the Law of God can be doubted by none that own the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. If we ſuppoſe (with the generality of Expoſitors) that our Saviour's Sermon in the Mount gives us an Interpretation of rather then an addition to the precepts of the *Decalogue*, there is no queſtion but *common ſwearing* is one inſtance of *taking God's Holy Name* in *vain* forbidden in the *Third Command.* But none ever pretended to deny, that our Saviour here forbids all ſuch *Common Swearing*, when he ſo ſtrictly charges us not to *Swear at all*, when he enjoyns that *our Communication be Yea, Yea, Nay, Nay*, and adds this reaſon of it, *For whatſoever is more than theſe comes of evil*, See *Matth.* 5. from verſ. 34. to 38. For he delivers this charge in oppoſition to the *Jewiſh Doctors*, who themſelves thought *ſwearing by the Name of God* in their ordinary converſe *unlawful*, but made greater allowance for what they accounted *ſmaller Oaths*, as *ſwearing by Creatures* without any expreſs appeal to God or mention of him. And ſince our Lord condemns all *leſſer Oaths* in common Converſe, he muſt in all reaſon be underſtood much more to forbid all common ſwearing by the *Name of God.* And 'tis evident that the *Apoſtle James* ſo underſtood theſe words of our Saviour, when he delivers the like prohibition in ſo peremptory and comprehenſive Expreſſions, *But above all things,*

my Brethren, ſwear not, neither by Heaven, nor by Earth, neither by any other Oath. But let your Yea be Yea, and your Nay be Nay, &c. James 5. 12. So that no man can doubt of *common ſwearing* being a plain violation of the Law of Chriſt. And 'tis ſuch a one as is manifeſtly *wilful* Every man can eaſily forbear it he pleaſe to ſpeak irreverently of his Earthly Prince, and ſure he may as eaſily forbear to treat with the like bold irreverence the ſacred Name of the Sovereign Majeſty of Heaven.

Nor is *raſh Curſing* leſs evidently forbidden, Thus we are charg'd by the Ap. *Paul, Bleſs and Curſe not. Rom.* 12. 14. And ſure if we were allow'd to *curſe* any, it ſhou'd be thoſe that are our unreaſonable and malicious *Enemies.* But we muſt be ſo far from wiſhing Evil to them that on the contrary we are enjoyn'd, *To love our Enemies, to bleſs them that curſe us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe and perſecute us. Matth.* 5. 44. And accordingly the Ap. *James* mentions *Curſing* as one great inſtance and proof of the *Tongue's being an unruly evil, full of deadly poyſon. Jam.* 3. 8, 9. And 'tis ſo heinous an Evil in the *Pſalmiſt*'s Judgment, that he gives this as the genuine character of a Wicked Perſon, *That his mouth is full of curſing, Pſ.* 10. 7. And no wonder when this *Sin* is ſo oppoſite to that *Love* of our Neighbour which is the ſum of all the Duties of the ſecond Table. And for that ſin of a man's *curſing himſelf*, 'tis evidently included and imply'd in the forementiond prohibitions. And if it be not ſo expreſsly mention'd, 'tis only becauſe 'tis too unnatural a Crime to need any explicit condemnation. And indeed it argues a monſtrous degeneracy of human Nature that any man ſhou'd be found guilty of it.

Thoſe then muſt needs be inexcuſable who profeſs their veneration for the authority of our bleſſed Saviour, and yet allow themſelves in the perverſe violation of Precepts ſo plain, ſo juſt, and ſo eaſie to be obſerv'd. Sure ſuch perſons ſhou'd be ſenſible of the notorious inconſiſtency of their common practice with the ſincerity of their profeſſion. To be a *Chriſtian*, and yet a common *Murderer, Adulterer, Whoremonger, Thief, Drunkard, &c.* look at firſt view very *incompatible*: And ſure it is as hard to reconcile a Man's being

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a *Chriſtian* with his being a *common Swearer or Curſer*. So that if Men will not renounce theſe Vices, they wou'd in ſome reſpects do more right to Chriſt and his Holy Religion by openly renouncing his Name, and caſting off that honourable Livery of his, which they only diſgrace and ſtain by wearing of it.

Secondly, I wou'd farther argue againſt theſe Vices from the *intrinſick evil and pernicious tendency of e'm*.

I begin with *Common-ſwearing*, and I here chiefly intend that Swearing wherein the Name of God is more expreſsly us'd and which is therefore eſpecially call'd Profane Swearing, and of the malignant nature and tendency of this Sin, I ſhall only among many others mention the following inſtances.

1. I have already ſuggeſted, *That common ſwearing does in the very nature of it, debaſe a ſolemn act of Religious Worſhip by proſtituting it to a common and mean uſe.*

'Tis only ſome momentous occaſion and urgent neceſſity can warrant ſuch ſolemn Appeals to God, and they ſhou'd be made with all appearance of profound Awe and Reverence. So that this act of Divine Worſhip is profan'd and expos'd to contempt, when us'd in a raſh or trifling manner, without any ſubſerviency to ſuch a valuable end. But

2. *Common ſwearing argues a want of due Reverence towards God in the mind of the ſpeaker, and tends to abate it in the mind of the Hearers.*

For it cannot be eaſily conceiv'd that that Man's Soul is habituated to awful apprehenſions of ſo great and terrible a *Majeſty*, who can ordinarily allow himſelf to *trifle* with his fearful and reverend *Name*, and dare preſume upon every *trivial* occaſion to make *raſh Appeals* to his *all ſeeing Eye*, and to his *avenging Juſtice*. For ſure none that has a real and profound veneration for ſo adorable a Being, wou'd ever make this uſe of his Name without holy trembling and dread, and without great deliberation both concerning the Truth of what he ſpeaks, and the juſt Occaſion of interpoſing him as the Witneſs of it. What then can we conclude concerning ſuch as dare upon every ſlight occaſion make a common By-word of his dreadful Name, ſuch as never ſcruple to call the ſovereign Judg of the

whole Earth to atteſt and avouch their ordinary Talk, and ſtand *Guarantee* for the truth of all their trifling Aſſertions, but that there is no fear of him before their *Eyes*, no ſenſe of his unconceivable greatneſs and glory upon their *Hearts*? How deſpicable is that Sovereign Majeſty in thy eſteem, when thou dareſt with ſo high a preſumption abuſe thoſe ſacred Titles of his to rant and bluſter with, that ſhou'd not be mention'd without profound humility and dread! Is this ſuch an *Hallowing his Glorious Name* as he requires and thou pretendeſt ſo often to pray for, to treat it with leſs reſpect then thou woud'ſt the name of thy Prince or thy Father, nay to defile it by making it ſerve ſo vile an end as the venting thy unruly Paſſion, whenever it prompts thee to rage & ſtorm againſt thy fellow-Creatures? Can thoſe be thought to ſtand in awe of that bleſſed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who are not afraid to bandy about his adorable Name, as if that were intended to be the common ſcorn and ſport of a leud and irreligious age?

And as this argues ſuch Irreverence towards God in the *Swearer*, ſo it tends to corrupt the minds of thoſe that hear him. For they are thereby (ſo far as the Swearers Example can influence and infect e'm) tempted to the ſame ſlight apprehenſions of that glorious Majeſty, and contempt of his Omniſcience and Juſtice, that the Swearer evidences by his bold and profane abuſe of his holy Name. So that 'tis no thanks to the *common Swearer* that thoſe he converſes with retain any awe of God upon their minds, when they hear him dayly treating him with ſo open diſreſpect and inſolent irreverence.

3. *Common ſwearing tends to leſſen Men's Reverence of an Oath it ſelf, and conſequently to prepare e'm for the horrid guilt of Perjury or Falſe-ſwearing.*

'Tis the character of a good Man, That *He fears an Oath, Eccleſ.* 9. 2. and therefore as he will not needleſsly ſwear at all, ſo when he muſt do it, he has the ſtricteſt regard poſſible to the *truth* of what he *affirms*, or *ſincerity* of what he *promiſes* under ſuch an awful Bond. But now 'tis evident that *common Swearers* are ſeldom or never very *critical* in examining the Truth of thoſe ordinary Aſſer-

Aſſertions, which they raſhly interpoſe the Name of God to warrant and confirm. It cannot reaſonably be thought they ſhou'd be ſo very cautious in all they ſpeak at random, and eſpecially under the tranſport of paſſion, when of all times they are prone to *ſwear the faſteſt*. So that if once a Man come ſo far by the habitual practice of this Sin, as to make no Conſcience of uſing Oaths to atteſt all that he utters in the heat of Diſcourſe, (when he has neither leiſure nor ſufficient ſedateneſs of mind to enquire warily into the truth of what he ſaith), He gives us juſt ground to conclude that he makes little matter of an *Oath*, ſince he dos upon ſo ſmall an occaſion run the hazard of *forſwearing himſelf*. And if a man can ſo eaſily forſwear himſelf in *Paſſion*, what ſecurity have we, that he will not do it in *cool Blood*, when he is under a ſtrong Temptation, and hopes his Perjury may paſs undiſcover'd? For what ſhou'd in this caſe reſtrain him from it? If it be the Natural Reverence of an Oath, and dread of the Juſtice of God as concern'd to avenge all Perjury, ſure if theſe principles were prevalent & ſtrong in him, they wou'd reſtrain him from all raſh Swearing. For he cannot reaſonably pretend to *fear an Oath* that ordinarily *Swears at random*; Nor can he pretend to be much aw'd with the apprehenſions of God's *avenging Juſtice* that ſo frequently makes ſuch *haſty inconſiderate Appeals* to it. It may be fear'd that he that ſcruples not the leſſer guilt may venture on the greater, ſince thoſe principles are evidently weaken'd in him that ſhou'd preſerve him from it. And doubtleſs, 'Tis very much owing to this Vice of *Common Swearing*, that *Perjury* it ſelf has ſo greatly abounded among us. A *crime* that at once tends utterly to deſtroy all *Reverence of God* and *Faith among men*. So that if we wou'd not have this Wickedneſs (which is both the higheſt *ſcandal* to *Religion* and the moſt pernicious *Bane* to *civil Societys*) to grow upon us, That *Common Swearing* muſt be reſtrain'd, which has ſo evident a tendency to prepare men for it, by turning *Solemn Oaths* into *cuſtomary Forms of ſpeaking*.

For the Sin of profane Curſing the malignant Nature and tendency of it will ſufficiently appear in theſe two Inſtances

1. *Tis a Sin that implys a high degree of Uncharitableneſs towards men.*

For if *Curſers* really mean as they ſpeak, (and what opinion muſt we entertain of their truth and honeſty if they do not?) They imprecate the greateſt miſchiefs imaginable to their fellow creatures, as commonly no leſs then that the *Devil may take them* or *God may damn them.* Now if they are in earneſt, what can we take them for but *Incarnate Devils* that ſo paſſionately deſire the eternal ruin and miſery of others? For if *Devils* cou'd ſpeak with human voyce, what language cou'd we expect from thoſe envious Spirits more ſuitable to the poyſonous malignity of their nature then this? And what injury are any of our fellow creatures capable of doing to us, that can any way juſtify the barbarous cruelty of ſuch direful Imprecations? Wou'd we indeed have all that croſs our humour or Intereſt, or offer us the leaſt Indignity and affront, doom'd for it, to remedileſs Flames and to the vengeance of Eternal Fire? This were not only to give way to the worſt paſſion of human nature *Revenge*, but to carry it beyond all bounds, as if no leſs then the irreparable miſery of an Immortal Soul cou'd compenſate every petty injury we receive. But if *Curſers* pretend, that they do not mean ſo ill as they ſpeak, and that their *real* wiſhes are not ſo unmerciful as their *verbal* ones, why then ſhou'd they affect to talk ſo like *embodied Feinds*? Why ſhou'd they ſuffer their Tongues to be thus *ſet on fire of Hell*? Why ſhou'd they thus habituate them to the proper *dialect* of the Infernal Regions?

And if it be ſo uncharitable a thing to *curſe* others, what ſtupid barbarity is it for a Man to *curſe* and *damn* himſelf. This is ſuch an inſtance of wickedneſs as we can ſcarce think of without aſtoniſhment, ſo that were Men ſuppoſed ſerious in ſuch Imprecations, we muſt conclude that they are paſſionately deſirous of their own endleſs deſtruction, and impatient for the execution of it. So that did we not ſee the contrary, we ſhou'd be ſtrongly tempted to think ſuch perſons to be under the power of *diſtraction* and *frenzy*. But alas we find by the uſe of their Reaſon in other matters, 'tis only a *voluntary Frenzy*, a *Madneſs* that their atheiſtical

iſtical Temper and their outragious Paſſions are the only cauſes of.

2. *Profane Curſing expreſſes a very inſolent contempt of the great God.*

I know indeed many uſe ſuch *Curſes* againſt *others* as *words of courſe* to expreſs their paſſion by. And therefore wou'd be ready to think we wrong e'm if we ſhou'd ſuppoſe their inward *intentions* as *uncharitable* as their *expreſſions*. And perhaps it may be reaſonably thought that few of thoſe have arriv'd to ſuch a height of diabolical malice who yet too commonly uſe this helliſh language. But what apology then can ſuch perſons make for their bold abuſe of the vindictive juſtice of God, when by their Curſes they make ſuch raſh and ſenſeleſs addreſſes to it to execute the dictates of their unruly paſſion & rage? As if the *Vengeance* of the univerſal Sovereign and Judg of the whole Earth were to be at our beck to accompliſh every wicked Imprecation that our Anger or Malice prompts us to utter! Can we imagin the Hearts of thoſe to be poſſeſs'd with any deep veneration for that great and terrible Majeſty, who can find nothing elſe to triſle with or vent their haſty paſſion by, but his *tremendous vindictive Righteouſneſs* and *his final ſentence of eternal Damation*? For ſure if we either conſider'd or believ'd what theſe things mean, we ſhou'd not dare to *play with thoſe edged Tools*, nor with that *Fool* (mention'd *Prov.* 26. 18.) *caſt forth Firebrands, Arrows, and Death*, and then pretend we are but in *ſport* or in *paſſion*. This is plainly to affront that very Attribute of God which above all others claims our profoundeſt dread, and ſhou'd rather ſtrike us with Terror and Trembling.

And for the ſin of Men's *curſing themſelves*, it argues an almoſt incredible contempt of the Divine Vengeance. So that were not our Ears often grated with this language, it cou'd ſcarce be thought that any cou'd arrive to ſuch a pitch of deſperate and daring Impiety. For theſe Curſes are ſuch a bold and open *defiance* of the glorious Majeſty of Heaven, as we may well queſtion whether *Devils* themſelves are guilty of. For they are ſaid to *believe and tremble*: *Jam.* 2. 19. They are repreſented as *beſeeching* our Saviour that *he wou'd not torment e'm before the time*. *Matth.* 8. v. 29. *Luk.* 8. v. 28.

Whereas the more *insolent* and *fearless* sinners of our Age, do with an unheard of impudence challenge the *Justice* of God as if it were too *slow* in it's execution, and call for their own *damnation* as if it were too *long* a coming. What tho they pretend they do not wish it *in good earnest*? Shou'd they give a righteous God so great provocation to take them at their word, and fulfil their bold Imprecation? Can they find nothing to *trifle* with and abuse but his *tremendous Vengeance*, Nothing to *sport* with but *Hell and Damnation*? Shou'd not such *guilty* Creatures rather tremble at the thoughts of the *living* God, and dread to fall into his *avenging hands*? Shou'd such *dry stubble* thus *provoke* or *play with* the *Consuming Fire*? *Hebr.* 12. *ult.* Is he the everlasting King and Judg, *at whose Wrath the Earth trembles, and the Nations are not able to abide his Indignation*, and shall every despicable Criminal and Malefactor with a desperate madness thus dare his Almighty Power, and challenge his Vindictive Arm, thus *stretch out his hand against God, and strengthen himself against the Almighty*, thus *run upon him, even upon his Neck and upon the thick bosses of his Buckler*? (To use the Elegant Expressions of *Eliphaz*, *Job.* 15, 25, 26.) How monstrous and amazing Impiety and folly is this? But

Thirdly I proceed to argue against these *Vices* from *the awful Threats of God denounc't against them.*

And as *both* these *Sins* (if we will allow the *third Precept* of the *Decalogue* that latitude and extent that our Saviour's Exposition gives it) are a *Taking Gods holy Name in vain, i. e.* a very presumptuous irreverent abuse of it, so there is a very terrible Threatning annext against the Breachers of it, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain*, *Exod.* 20. 7. *i. e.* He will vindicate the glory of his sacred Name by severely punishing those that treat it with such profane Indignity and contempt. And agreably hereto the *Ap. James*, enforces this Caution *not to swear at all*, with this Argument, *Least you fall into condemnation. James*, 5, v. 12. (For so most copys read it, tho if we shou'd read it (as some do) εἰς ὑποκρισιν, *Least you fall into hypocrisy*, It will confirm the Argument against Common Swearing from it's tendency to involve men in the guilt of *Perjury*). Thus to have

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our Mouths *full of Cursing and Bitterness*, is one of those sins that render men *obnoxious to the Vengeance of God*. *Rom.* 3. 14. compar'd with vers. 19. And our Saviour plainly intimates to us, That except in this point of *swearing* our *Righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees* (tho they allow'd only *common swearing by Creatures*) *we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. *Matth.* 5. 20. And as these general Threatnings give all common Swearers and Cursers so just reason to fear the same eternal *Vengeance* and *Wrath* that's now *reveal'd from Heaven against all ungodliness of Men*, (and consequently against these palpable instances of it) *Rom.* 1. 18. So other passages of Scripture plainly imply these Sins to be among the number of those *crying provocations*, that usually draw down *temporal Judgments*, and even *publick* ones where they generally abound and reign uncontroul'd. Thus *Hos.* 4. 2, 3. In the Catalogue of those *Vices* for which *the Land is said to mourn* (*i. e.* thro the dismal Calamities they entail upon it) *Swearing* leads the *van*, and is follow'd by *Lying, Killing, Theft, and Adultery*. (Crimes of the first magnitude.) To the same purpose we read, *Jer.* 23. 10. Because of *Swearing* (or as your Margin reads it, *Cursing*) *the Land mourns* Thus the *flying Roll* of the Prophet *Zachary full of Curses* is levell'd against the *Swearer* in general, as well as the *False Swearer*, bringing with it a fatal *consumption* on his very *House* and *Family*; as if a Righteous God was resolv'd to *raze their Name* out of this *Earth* that so *pollute* and *dishonour his*. Zech. 5. 2, 3, 4, 5.

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Fourth and last place, to argue against these Sins from *the weakness and folly of those pretences that are alledg'd to excuse and extenuate e'm.*

It has been often and justly objected against *profane swearing*, That no Man has any shew of temptation to it. In other Crimes the Devil proposes some specious Bait, some *sensual Pleasure* or *worldly advantage*. And tho this will no way justify our known violation of any Laws of God, who proposes Arguments to countervail these of infinitely higher moment, yet a Man's being drawn to sin chiefly by such allurements, seems at least to argue, that he

chooſes the ſin principally for the *gain* and the *pleaſure's* ſake? That he is not acted by meer contempt of the authority of God; and wou'd not have tranſgreſs't his Commands, if they had not interfer'd with his ſecular profit, or ſenſual delight. But tho this be in it ſelf a very ſorry pretence, and a ſmall extenuation of a man's guilt, yet even this is more then the *common ſwearer* can ſay for himſelf. He cannot pretend that he *pleaſes his Senſes or Appetites* by thus *wounding his Conſcience*. His numerous Oaths increaſe no other *Treaſures* but thoſe of *Divine Wrath*. No *paſſion* of human Nature ſeems gratify'd by this ſin, unleſs it be a wretched *malignity* and *deſpight* againſt the bleſſed God himſelf. So that the *common ſwearer* of all men ſeems to ſerve the Devil for *nought* and to be *wicked* for meer *wickedneſs* ſake.

And what is ſo juſtly ſaid of *profane ſwearing* may be in a great meaſure applyed to *curſing* too. For men cannot pretend to gratify any other paſſion by it but that of *Revenge*; and they are ſo far from attaining this end, that their Curſes uſually return on their own *Heads*, and like a *recoyling Gun* only *wound* and *miſchieve thoſe* that let it off.

But ſince theſe *Vices* are practis'd by many that pretend to *wit* and *ſenſe*, we ſhou'd perhaps affront their judgment if we ſhou'd ſuppoſe they had nothing to ſay for themſelves. And therefore it will be here requiſite to take notice of ſuch *Pleas* or *Excuſes* as they uſually offer. And

Firſt ſome alledg, *That they rarely Swear or Curſe but when they are in paſſion, and in that caſe they find it hard to forbear, and hope their paſſion will at leaſt very much excuſe their fault.*

To ſhew the vanity of this pretence, I ſhall only ſuggeſt the following particulars.

1. *Such anger it ſelf, if it exceed the bounds preſcrib'd by the Law of God, is very ſinful; and much more when it tranſports a Man to ſuch inſtances of profaneneſs and impiety as theſe.* If he that calls a Man *Fool* in paſſion be in *danger of Hell-fire*, *Matth.* 5. 23. what is he that furiouſly *damns him to the Pit of Hell it ſelf?* So that *paſſion* is no better excuſe for *ſwearing* and *curſing* then 'tis for the *Murders* which ſo many commit in the heat of blood. As nothing will ſa-

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tisfy such *Murderers* upon every slight injury but the *blood* of him that has done it, so nothing will satisfy the *Curser* but his *Damnation.*

2, *Whatever temptation injuries may give us in our passion to curse those that do e'm, they cannot be pretended as any temptation to profane swearing.*

Suppose that thy *fellow creature* has offer'd thee never so great an affront which thy passion prompts thee to revenge, is that any tolerable plea why thou should'st execute that revenge upon thy *Maker?* Is it *he* that has done thee harm? Is it against *him* thou art incens't? Or hast thou no better way to retaliate the wrongs of thy *Enemy*, then by doing a far greater injury to the *author* of thy Being and the great *Benefactor* of thy Life? Are their provocations any ground for thy tearing and defiling his sacred Name, by whose power thou art every moment preserv'd, and on whose daily care and innumerable benefits, thy life it self and the continued comfort thereof depends? How *senselessly* dost thou pursue thy *Revenge*, when to vent thy indignation against *him* that has done thee some (perhaps *inconsiderable*) *evil*, thou flyest in the face of thy *best Friend*, and offerest the vilest indignity to *him* that has done thee the *greatest good*? This sure is such an instance of stupid folly and madness as can hardly be paralel'd.

3. *No Provocation can justify our Cursing those that offer it.*

For all *Curses* are but the gratification of that *private Revenge* which the divine Law has strictly forbidden. And indeed a Propensity thereto is one of the most noted Lineaments of the *Devil's Image* upon us, and most opposite to that Goodness which is the brightest part of the amiable Image of *God.* 'Tis the character of his children, *To love their Enemys, To bless those that curse them, and to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute them.* Whereas to *wish* Evil to others as well as to *do* it to them, are passions that are only *kindled from the fire of Hell.* And how unreasonable are the *Wishes* themselves considering the smalness of the occasion? Another has given thee *ill words*, or done thee some *petty injury*, or perhaps only *cross't thy unreasonable humour*, and for this, thou desirest he may *fall under the direful Curse of God, and*

be damn'd to endleſs miſery. Is there any thing but monſtrous uncharitableneſs and deviliſh ſpite in ſuch wiſhes? Or if thou pretendeſt that thou doſt not really deſire it, but only ſpeakeſt ſuch words to expreſs thy deep reſentment of the Injury receiv'd, haſt thou no other way to make thy *fellow creature* ſenſible of the wrong he has done, but ſuch raſh addreſſes to the terrible vengeance of *God*? Canſt thou find nothing for thy paſſion to abuſe but his *tremendous Judgments*? Will no *Language* ſerve thee to vent thy diſpleaſure in, but ſuch as is fitter for an *Incarnate Feind* then a *profeſſed Chriſtian*? Nay ſince thy raſh Curſes can do no harm to thoſe they are darted againſt, but do truly arm the vengeance of God againſt thy ſelf, whilſt thou *really* hazard thy *own Damnation* meerly for the ſatisfaction of thy Revenge in *vainly* wiſhing *their's*? And for men's *Curſing themſelves* 'tis a yet more amazing height of Folly, becauſe others have done us a *ſmall wrong* to wiſh our own *eternal ruine*, and give the Juſtice of God the higheſt *provocation* to execute it.

Secondly others pretend, *That there's no way ſo proper for e'm to keep their Inferiors in awe, as by ſuch language as this. That a ſawcy Servant, or bold Clown can no way be ſo eaſily humbled and frightned into his duty as by a volley of Oaths and Curſes, and will ſcarce think a Man in good earneſt offended with him unleſs he ſwear and damn.*

To this pretence I ſhall only ſay theſe two things.

1. *This is no more then a bare pretence.* There are thouſands in the World that know well enough how to keep their Inferiors in due awe and ſubjection without any ſuch *unhallowed* arts of Government. And thoſe that will not be frightned with the grave *threats* and *frowns* of ſuch as have a juſt right to chaſtize their Inſolence, will as ſtifly ſtand the ſhock of an empty peal of *Oaths* and *Curſes*. Whereas if they find that a Superior punctually makes his threats good, they'l as readily believe e'm for the future as if he *ſwore* to e'm.

2. As this is but a meer *pretence*, ſo *'tis a very unreaſonable and ſenſeleſs one.*

Is it a matter of such concern to keep thy Inferiors in awe, that thou shoudst scruple no means that tend to it? To treat them with extravagant passion or barbarous severity wou'd as effectually do it. But wou'd the attaining of that end excuse the use of such inhuman means? How much less then will it excuse thy blasphemous Insolence against God? Hast thou no other way to make others stand in *fear of thee*, then by assuming the character of the unjust Judg, who *neither feared God nor regarded Man*? *Luke*, 18, 2. Canst thou find no better expedient to prevent the *affronts* of *others*, then by offering thy self the most daring *Indignitys* unto the *Majesty of Heaven*? Must nothing but his adorable name serve thee to *hector* and *rant* with? Is there no way of persuading others that thou art angry with them but by calling on him to *damn them*, as if his impartial Justice were at the call and command of every such wild Fury as thy self?

Thirdly others pretend, *That they have no other end in Swearing and Cursing but to perswade others of the truth of what they say.*

Answer 1. *This can justify no Oaths but what we use on solemn Occasions, where some important but doubted truth needs to be confirm'd by human Testimony.* And in such Cases solemn appeals to God by *Oaths* are allowable.

2. *Oaths ordinarily us'd in common Conversation are no proper means to attain any such end as the giving credit to our Assertions.* If thou art a Man of known Veracity and Truth such Oaths are in ordinary Converse altogether needless, and thy bare affirmation will be sufficient without them. Why then shoud'st thou call thy own honesty into question, by acting as if thou suppos'd'st that no man will believe thy *bare Word* without thy *Oath* to confirm it? But if thy Veracity be really doubted by those thou converse'st with, thy rash multiply'd Oaths will signify little to remove their suspicion. For those with whom Swearing is a *customary* thing, and *Oaths* but *words of course*, no wise man will ever lay a greater stress upon them then upon their *naked affirmations*. For he that scarce speaks without an *Oath*, if he be given to *Lying*, is as prone to swear when he *speaks false* as when he *speaks true*, and

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be damn'd to endleſs miſery. Is there any thing but monſtrous uncharitableneſs and deviliſh ſpite in ſuch wiſhes? Or if thou pretendeſt that thou doſt not really deſire it, but only ſpeakeſt ſuch words to expreſs thy deep reſentment of the Injury receiv'd, haſt thou no other way to make thy *fellow creature* ſenſible of the wrong he has done, but ſuch raſh addreſſes to the terrible vengeance of *God*? Canſt thou find nothing for thy paſſion to abuſe but his *tremendous Judgments*? Will no *Language* ſerve thee to vent thy diſpleaſure in, but ſuch as is fitter for an *Incarnate Feind* then a *profeſſed Chriſtian*? Nay ſince thy raſh Curſes can do no harm to thoſe they are darted againſt, but do truly arm the vengeance of God againſt thy ſelf, whilſt thou *really* hazard thy *own Damnation* meerly for the ſatisfaction of thy Revenge in *vainly* wiſhing *their's*? And for men's *Curſing themſelves* 'tis a yet more amazing height of Folly, becauſe others have done us a *ſmall wrong* to wiſh our own *eternal ruine*, and give the Juſtice of God the higheſt *provocation* to execute it.

Secondly others pretend, *That there's no way ſo proper for e'm to keep their Inferiors in awe, as by ſuch language as this. That a ſawcy Servant, or bold Clown can no way be ſo eaſily humbled and frightned into his duty as by a volley of Oaths and Curſes, and will ſcarce think a Man in good earneſt offended with him unleſs he ſwear and damn.*

To this pretence I ſhall only ſay theſe two things.

1. *This is no more then a bare pretence.* There are thouſands in the World that know well enough how to keep their Inferiors in due awe and ſubjection without any ſuch *unhallowed* arts of Government. And thoſe that will not be frightned with the grave *threats* and *frowns* of ſuch as have a juſt right to chaſtize their Inſolence, will as ſtifly ſtand the ſhock of an empty peal of *Oaths* and *Curſes*. Whereas if they find that a Superior punctually makes his threats good, they'l as readily believe e'm for the future as if he *ſwore* to e'm.

2. As this is but a meer *pretence*, ſo *'tis a very unreaſonable and ſenſeleſs one.*

Is

Is it a matter of ſuch concern to keep thy Inferiors in awe, that thou ſhoudſt ſcruple no means that tend to it? To treat them with extravagant paſſion or barbarous ſeverity wou'd as effectually do it. But wou'd the attaining of that end excuſe the uſe of ſuch inhuman means? How much leſs then will it excuſe thy blaſphemous Inſolence againſt God? Haſt thou no other way to make others ſtand in *fear of thee*, then by aſſuming the character of the unjuſt Judg, who *neither feared God nor regarded Man*? *Luke*, 18, 2. Canſt thou find no better expedient to prevent the *affronts* of *others*, then by offering thy ſelf the moſt daring *Indignitys* unto the *Majeſty of Heaven*? Muſt nothing but his adorable name ſerve thee to *hector* and *rant* with? Is there no way of perſuading others that thou art angry with them but by calling on him to *damn them*, as if his impartial Juſtice were at the call and command of every ſuch wild Fury as thy ſelf?

Thirdly others pretend, *That they have no other end in Swearing and Curſing but to perſwade others of the truth of what they ſay.*

Anſwer 1. *This can juſtify no Oaths but what we uſe on ſolemn Occaſions, where ſome important but doubted truth needs to be confirm'd by human Teſtimony.* And in ſuch Caſes ſolemn appeals to God by *Oaths* are allowable.

2. *Oaths ordinarily us'd in common Converſation are no proper means to attain any ſuch end as the giving credit to our Aſſertions.* If thou art a Man of known Veracity and Truth ſuch Oaths are in ordinary Converſe altogether needleſs, and thy bare affirmation will be ſufficient without them. Why then ſhoud'ſt thou call thy own honeſty into queſtion, by acting as if thou ſuppoſed'ſt that no man will believe thy *bare Word* without thy *Oath* to confirm it? But if thy Veracity be really doubted by thoſe thou converſeſt with, thy raſh multiply'd Oaths will ſignify little to remove their ſuſpicion. For thoſe with whom Swearing is a *cuſtomary* thing, and *Oaths* but *words of courſe*, no wiſe man will ever lay a greater ſtreſs upon them then upon their *naked affirmations*. For he that ſcarce ſpeaks without an *Oath*, if he be given to *Lying*, is as prone to ſwear when he *ſpeaks falſe* as when he *ſpeaks true*, and

indeed ordinarily ſcarce obſerves or conſiders when he *ſwears* and when he *dos not*. Nay

3. *Cuſtomary Swearing rather diſſerves and croſſes this very end that is pretended to Excuſe it.*

For Swearing and Lying are ſo neerly ally'd, and ſo ſeldom ſeperated, that he that will do the *one*, it may be ſtrongly preſum'd he will not much ſcruple the *other*. What can give us a probable ground to conclude a mans Veracity but this, *That he ſeems to have the fear of God before his Eyes.* So that if a Man appear devoy'd of that, we have little ſecurity of the truth of what he ſays. And what can give us a juſter ſuſpition of that, then that he has no *fear of an Oath*, and no *reverence* for the ſacred *Name of God*? And mankind have generally ſo true a ſence of this, that with all but a few weak and ſilly people, The *more* a man *Swears* the *leſs* he is *believ'd*, and his very multiply'd raſh *Oaths* raiſe a ſuſpicion of the truth of what he ſpeaks when there is ſcarce any other ground for it.

Fourthly others pretend, *that they have got ſuch a Cuſtom of Swearing that they cannot leave it.*

To this Plea I ſhall only give this brief Reply.

1. *If men ſhou'd alledg the ſame pretence for other Sins they wou'd eaſily ſee the folly of it.*

So has many a *Drunkard* an untoward inveterate Cuſtom of *making a Beaſt of himſelf.* Many a *Thief* can hardly forbear *pilfering* when he has a tempting opportunity. Many are ſo habituated to *Lying* that they can ſcarce tell when they do it. And ſome mens *brutal Luſts* ſeem to hurry them with an uncontrouled violence. But ſure this is thought in all other Caſes a horrible aggravation of men's Sins, becauſe it ſhews that they have by long practice ſo ſtupify'd their Conſciences that they make little or no reſiſtance againſt Temptations, being now become ſeared and paſt feeling. And ſhall that then be thought to Excuſe the guilt of *Swearers* that heightens the guilt of all other Sinners? How comes this Dialect of Hell to be ſo *familiar* to thee, but by the *frequent* endulged uſe of it? And dos that abate the Crime and render it leſs hainous and deteſtable?

2. *Men*

2. *Men are under no greater inability to leave this ſin then o-thers.*

'Tis a plain evidence, That mens pretences that they cannot forbear are but unreaſonable, when the moſt deſperate Swearer can refrain in company that he ſtands in any awe of. The very fear of the *penalty* has already laid a conſiderable reſtraint on this Vice. And if men wou'd once uſe their conſidering powers, ſhou'd not the *fear of God* do as much to curb e'm as the *fear of Men*? Beſides the grace of God is not wanting to ſincere endeavours. He that calls us to Repentance for this and all other ſins, can upon our humble application to him, give us ſtrength to perform our ſerious purpoſes of it.

3. *If thou canſt not leave this wretched habit of Swearing and Curſing, there's no remedy but to ſuffer the Vengeance denounc't againſt ſuch ſins.*

Is it *cuſtomary* to *thee* to *ſwear* and *damn*, ſo is it *cuſtomary* with a righteous *God* to *avenge* ſuch *abuſe* of his holy Name and *contempt* of his Terrible Juſtice. If thou canſt not *reform* thy practice ſo neither can he *repent* of his dreadful Threatnings. If thy inveterate wickedneſs lay thee under ſuch a *neceſſity* of going on to ſin, ſo will his inflexible Juſtice lay him under a *neceſſiety* of puniſhing ſuch incorrigible ſinners. But ſure 'tis far eaſier for *thee* to *change thy* temper and practice then for a juſt *God* to *change his* own nature, or to falſify the truth of his word.

Fifthly, ſome pretend, *That ſwearing is ſo much in faſhion that they ſhou'd be ridicul'd as preciſe and ſingular if they ſcrupled it.*

To this I wou'd only reply.

1. *If Swearing be in faſhion, 'tis ſo far from being a Mode peculiar to Perſons of Quality and Birth, that 'tis rather moſt us'd by the very ſcum of mankind.*

In this point of *breeding*, a *Porter* or *Coachman* can vye with a *Gentleman* or *Lord*, and the meaneſt *Centinel* or *Tarpaulin* equal the moſt *huffing Officer*. And indeed 'tis ſo far from adding any real *grace* or *decency* to men's language, that nothing uſually renders men's diſcourſes more ſottiſh and ſenſeleſs, more rude and ill-man-

ner'd then the *Oaths* and *Curſes* wherewith they *lard* it. So that were it not for grating upon the Ears of devout people, nothing cou'd do more to put men out of countenance with their helliſh Language then to repeat it to them. The Reader may ſee an Inſtance hereof in the late ingenious *Author of the Eſſays upon Projects*. For I am loth to *defile* this paper with ſo *abominable ſtuff*.

2. *If it be in faſhion to Swear and Curſe, it muſt needs be accounted a very odious one to all that have not quite ras't all ſence of piety out of their minds.*

For nothing can ever make *Swearing* and *Damning* paſs juſtly for a piece of *good breeding* till we can perſwade the World, 'tis a piece of commendable Gallantry to deſpiſe and defy the Deity, and that to be a *Rebel* againſt the Laws of Heaven is the trueſt *badg of honour* upon Earth. So that till *profeſſed Atheiſm* come in *vogue*, and *Vice* be capable of *ennobling* a man's blood, theſe Inſtances of *profaneſs* will never paſs for marks of *Gentility*, and to be a *Swearer* and *Curſer* will never be reckon'd among men's *Titles of Honour*.

3. *Let theſe Vices be never ſo common, No man ſhou'd Swear and Curſe for company that is not content to be damned for company too.*

If men muſt needs *go with a multitude to do Evil*, they know whither the *broad* way will lead e'm. But ſure 'tis much better to hazard the reproach of being *ſingular* and *preciſe* then out of compliance with ſo deteſtable a faſhion to venture upon *periſhing for ever*. 'Tis too great a *complaiſance* to a *lewd* age to *go to Hell* with e'm, and that *for nothing*.

Laſtly, ſome may poſſibly pretend, *That they at leaſt may be allow'd to Swear and Curſe, becauſe they believe neither God nor Devil, neither Heaven nor Hell.*

I muſt confeſs this is the moſt ſpecious Plea that can be alledg'd for ſuch practices. For he that believes *no God* has ſome pretence to make bold with what he takes to be an *empty name*. He has no fear of divine Juſtice to reſtrain him from an inſolent defiance of it. His Actions and his Principles are both of a piece. And yet even to ſuch I wou'd ſuggeſt what is ſufficient to diſſuade e'm from *Swearing* and *Curſing*. For

1. *This*

1. *This pretence cannot excuſe theſe Vices from rudeneſs and ill manners.*

There is no Man that pretends to the Education of a Gentleman, but will think it highly uncivil without the leaſt provocation, to abuſe any the Company has a great reſpect for. Sure then that good breeding it ſelf which Atheiſtical perſons ſometimes boaſt of, ſhou'd reſtrain them from *wounding* the Ears of thoſe that believe and reverence a Deity, with ſuch profane abuſe of his adored Name. Eſpecialy when thereby they violate the publick Laws and affront the authority of the Nation. 'Tis a great indecency to treat with *contempt* what the generality of mankind pay the higheſt *Veneration* to. And if every Loyal Subject reſent it as a great provocation to hear his Prince abus'd and vilify'd, they cannot imagine it a leſs offence to every good Man, to hear that Bleſſed Being treated with ſuch open Indignity to whom he bears the higheſt reverence and affection. And indeed in what pious Soul wou'd it not raiſe juſt horror and Indignation to hear that Eternal Majeſty, whom Angels adore and before whom Devils tremble, made the May-game and ſcorn of every irreligious and leud Buffoon?

2. *Even Intereſt it ſelf ſhou'd reſtrain Atheiſtical Perſons from theſe Vices.*

For 'tis certain they get nothing by them. The Age is not yet ſo degenerate that meer *Damning* will qualify a man for *preferment*. And the moſt brutiſh *Epicure* might enjoy all his beloved *pleaſures* and never miſs that of *Swearing*. Now if there be no advantage to be had by theſe ſins, 'tis much ſafer to let them alone. For after all the confidence of Atheiſts, 'tis poſſible there may be a God and a Life to come. So that if their great confidence ſhou'd in this point deceive them, (as moſt certainly it will) they'l find that their Oaths and Curſes will but encreaſe the ſcore of their Guilt, and render the ſight of their incenſed Judg more unſupportable to them. For among all their other ſins (as I have already ſuggeſted) they'l find no ſhaddow of Excuſe for theſe. And indeed no man ſhou'd commit them but he who is willing to run the hazard of Damnation for the meer pleaſure of being wicked.

I shall only to these Arguments which are more directly suited to professed Christians, subjoyn the Judgment of the more sober Heathens in reference to the sin of *Swearing*, *if* possible to shame e'm out of it. *Plato* in his Book *de Legibus* mentions it as a commendable Institution, *That none should pollute the Names of the Gods by a slight customary mention of e'm* *Hierocles* recommends *Swearing rarely as necessary to preserve the due reverence of an Oath*, and speaks of *common Swearing* as the *high Road to Perjury*. *Quintilian* tells us, *a grave Man should not Swear except in cases of necessity*: And *Epictetus* advises, *if possible to avoid it*. *Isocrates* allows *Oaths* only in *two cases*, either to *vindicate one's Innocence*, or to *save one's Self or Friends from unjust Punishment*. And sure such strict Maximes deliver'd by *Pagan Moralists* shou'd make the very blood rise in the face of those *pretended Christians*, who fall so far short of their excellent Rules, and much more of those of our *Blessed Saviour*. For if we that enjoy the light of so glorious and clear a Revelation, do not practise what the very Light of Nature dictates, even *Pagans* will rise up in Judgment against us to *reproach* and *condemn* us.

And now I wou'd entreat the *Swearers* and *Cursers* of the Age (if they have not quite extinguish't their power of thinking) seriously to consider these plain Arguments, in which they'l find no rhetorical aggravations, but a naked representation of these Vices in their *native* but *ugly* hue. Which if they wou'd impartially do, one wou'd hope, unless they have quite abandon'd their Reason, they cannot withstand the evidence of Truth in e'm, nor go on in these wretched practices without offering as ungrateful violence to their own *Consciences*, as their profane language has long done to the *Ears* of all good Men.

Having dispatcht this first Head, I come

II. *To offer something for exciting both Magistrates and Private Persons to their duty in order to the suppressing these Vices by the effectual execution of the Law lately made against e'm.*

I begin with *Magistrates*. I know indeed the *Penalty* which the Act it self lays on the *Justices of Peace* in case they fail of their duty,

ty in executing it, may seem to make it needless to urge e'm to it. Yet since all Magistrates may do much to promote the design of this *Act*, by *encouraging Informations*, by *concealing the Name of the Informer* (where the discovery of it is no way necessary, nor can be legally demanded); and by *severely punishing any Revenge that Convicted Persons may execute on others for informing against e'm*; I shall only briefly suggest a few considerations to e'm.

1. *Your zeal for the honour of Almighty God should prompt you to do your utmost for the suppression of these Vices.*

You all pretend to make this one design of your publick Administrations. The great God puts an eminent opportunity into your hands to manifest the sincerity of your pretensions. If then you have any devout and affectionate Veneration for that Blessed and only Potentate, any real concern for his honour and for the uncontested interest of Religion, you have now a *fair occasion* to shew it. And if you emprove it not, God and all good Men will join in condemning your inexcusable *lukewarmness* in so *just* and *glorious* a Cause.

2. *Your regard to the publick safety should also engage you to it.*

You oft pretend a mighty zeal for the *Publick Good*. Now what can you do more likely to subserve that truly valuable end, then by stopping that torrent of Impiety and Prophaneness that is otherwise like to overflow us again with new and heavier Calamities?

I doubt not but all good men are fully perswaded, That our relapsing into these and other Vices has had a great influence on the prolonging the successes and triumphs of our Enemies, and the retarding our happy settlement. So that our hopes of a more favourable providence to make a happy change in the scene of our publick Affairs chiefly depend on the success of these attempts of a necessary and general Reformation. And those will do the truest service to their Country that are most instrumental and active in promoting it.

3. *Your concern for your own final account shou'd effectually excite you to it.*

As you profeſs ultimately to derive your Authority from God the Univerſal Sovereign, and Fountain of all civil power, ſo you own your ſelves accountable to him. Shou'd you not then ſeriouſly think how the great Judg of the Earth will reſent it, if you trifle with ſo great an advantage for vindicating and repairing his injured honour, and for reſtoring the Veneration due to his ſacred Name? And on the contrary. How highly he will approve of your fidelity, if you now anſwer your character by being *a Terror to Evil-doers*, If by the awe of your juſt authority, you force inſolent profaneneſs and iniquity to *ſtop it's mouth*, and caſt as open contempt on theſe deteſtable *Vices*, as they have done upon the *glory* of God. Let not the guilt of theſe publick Crimes lye any longer at your door, by your connivance at them or the ſlackneſs of your Endeavours to reſtrain them.

But I wou'd chiefly addreſs my ſelf to *private Perſons*. For ſince you are ſo much *concern'd* and are ſo *neceſſary Inſtruments* in the Execution of this Law, it will be needful to excite you to your duty. And the rather becauſe whereas the *Law* it ſelf obliges the *Magiſtrate* to do *his part*, 'Tis only *Conſcience* and a *ſincere regard to the glory of God* that can excite *you* to do *yours*. And to engage you to it, I ſhall briefly ſuggeſt to you the following particulars.

1. *'Tis your undoubted duty to contribute your Endeavours towards the ſuppreſſion of theſe deteſtable Vices.*

You can no more queſtion this, then you can your Obligations to advance the glory of God and promote a publick Reformation, ſo far as your private ſphere gives you fit opportunities for it. Thoſe did but perform their neceſſary duty that declar'd to *Moſes* the Blaſphemy of the *Son of Shelimith*, *Levit.* 24. 11. Nor thoſe that found out and convicted *Idolaters*, *Deut.* 17. 4, 5.— And there are multitudes of private perſons that can never expect a more eminent advantage of publick uſefulneſs to be put into their hands. So that their ſloth will be inexcuſable if they make no emprovement of ſo valuable a Talent. And ſure in the preſent conteſt between the *Kingdom of God* and *that of Satan*, between the intereſt of *Piety* and *Vertue* and that of *Profaneneſs* and *Vice*, no

good

good man ought to ſtand *Neuter*, and think himſelf unconcern'd which prevails. Such a clear Cauſe requires and will juſtify our *forward Zeal*, and here *lukewarmneſs* and *indifferency* are truly deteſtable.

2. *Without your Endeavours the deſign of this Law (viz the ſuppreſſing theſe Vices) is like to be fruſtrated, and the guilt thereof will in this caſe lye much upon your ſelves.* For without *Informations* there can be no *Convictions* and *Forfeitures*, and conſequently Offenders will go on in *bold defiance* both to the *Laws* of *God* and *Man*. So that if you ſhrink and give back, If you deſiſt from your Endeavours, from the conſideration of the ſmall trouble and hazard of them, the *declining* Cauſe of Profaneneſs will again *bear* up it's *head*, and endanger the overflowing the Land with a more irreſiſtible violence then it did before. You have now the *faireſt* opportunity put into your hands of promoting a publick Reformation, ſo that if you emprove it not, the guilt of other men's ſin will be in a great meaſure charg'd upon you. And will you that have ſo often ſeem'd to *pray* ſo earneſtly for the ſuppreſſion of theſe Vices decline ſo neceſſary endeavours to *farther* it? Shall ſo glorious and ſo bleſſed a work ſink thro your lukewarmneſs and indifferency in it? Do you pretend to *lament* theſe abominable crimes, and will you not do what is ſo evidently in your power towards the *cruſhing* of them? Shall the leud Swearers of the Age be more *Zealous* to *profane* then you to *keep up the Reverence* of God's Holy Name?

3. *There is a happy proſpect of ſucceſs in your Endeavours.*

For if once *Informations* become *general* by every good man's combining to do his part, Offenders will have no *hope of Impunity*. And Experience dos already ſufficiently tell us, that how *fond* ſoever men are of *Swearing*, yet they are *loth* to *pay* for it; ſo that we may hope in time they'l rather part with their *Oaths* then with their *Money*. Nay we ſee that how inſolent ſoever theſe ſinners ſeem in *outbraving the Juſtice of God*, yet they are wonderfully *appal'd* and *hang down their heads* when a *Conſtable* ſurprizes them with a *Warrant* upon a *ſecond* or *third Conviction*. And how much ſoever they were wont to *glory* in this vice, they do not take

it for any great honour to have their *Names* on *publick record* in the *black Roll*. In this Capital City Oaths are in a great measure silenc't in the *ſtreets* and ſeek ſhelter in the *Taverns* and *Ale-houſes*, nor are they altogether ſafe there. So that if you will but generally concur with unanimous zeal in giving in *Informations*, there is little doubt but the *fear of the penalty* will with the moſt effect what no other *Arguments* cou'd hitherto do. And I hope your attempts in this *City* will ſet a *Pattern* that will in a little time influence other parts of the *Kingdom*, and make the Reformation *Univerſal*.

4. *You have no ground to be either aſham'd or afraid in ſo neceſſary and commendable a ſervice to God and to the Intereſt of Religion.*

In this *honourable* Cauſe, that Name of an *Informer* which in moſt other caſes has juſtly ſo *ill* a ſound, is far from being any mark of Reproach. For Offenders themſelves, if they wou'd ſpeak impartially, cannot but own your practice to be free from any ſuſpicion of mean and baſe ends. For what ſhou'd incite a man without the leaſt proſpect of any *advantage* to himſelf, nay with a certain proſpect of ſome *trouble* and *danger*, to do ſo *unwelcome* an Office, and ſo likely to *diſoblige* thoſe whom he wou'd *reform*, but a ſincere *Zeal* for the honour of God and for the Obſervance of his Laws? They cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe you are acted with any other *Spite* and *Malice*, then a very *juſt* and *laudable* one againſt *Profaneneſs* and *Irreligion*. Nay ſhou'd thoſe you inform againſt, be ſo unreaſonable as to miſinterpret and cenſure your Zeal, ſure the *Approbation* of the great *God* and of all *good men*, ſhou'd ſufficiently counterballance their groundleſs *Reproaches* and *Calumnys*. And it will be found in the great day of Trial a greater honour to have been a *faithful Informer againſt Vice*, then a *baſe Conniver at it*, and *a wretched Betrayer of the honour of God and Religion*.

Nor ſhou'd you be diſcourag'd by the hazard you run of expoſing your ſelves to the *malice* or *revenge* of Offenders. If Magiſtrates wou'd but as generaly encourage *Informations* by refuſing to diſcover the *Informers* name without juſt cauſe (as ſome few to their great honour have done) this difficulty wou'd be in a great meaſure

ſure remov'd. But however that be, you have the *protection* of the *Laws* as a ſecurity againſt the injuries of any enrag'd Offenders, and I doubt not the Government wou'd puniſh e'm with a juſt ſeverity. But 'tis a far more conſiderable encouragement that you may expect the *protection* of the great *God* whoſe Cauſe you herein ſo ſignally eſpouſe. And ſhou'd your Zeal for his honour expoſe you to any preſent diſadvantage, he can eaſily make it up in *temporal Bleſſings*, and will do it abundantly with *eternal Rewards*. And ſure we are not the real Diſciples of Chriſt, if every appearance of difficulties can deter us from ſo evident a duty, if we dare *baulk* ſo ſignal a piece of ſervice, meerly becauſe we cannot do it without ſome *ſelf denyal* and *hazard*.

And if upon ſuch Conſiderations you reſolve upon the faithful diſcharge of your Duty, it will be eaſy to find out the moſt proper method of doing it. There are many in this City engag'd in that excellent work to whom you may adjoyn your ſelves. And indeed if every *Pariſh* had ſtated and ſelect Conſults, they might carry on this great and pious deſign with greater regularity, order and ſucceſs by their mutual advice and reſolution.

It remains now

III. *To enquire into the grounds of thoſe loud Complaints lately made againſt private Informations.*

'Tis evident, That the *Act againſt Swearing* dos no way require that the *Offender* ſhou'd be preſent, when the *Information* is given againſt him. Nor dos any *Clauſe* in it oblige the *Juſtices of the Peace* to diſcover the *Informer's Name*, when the *Offender* dos not diſpute the matter of fact. So that there is no pretence of this method (*of receiving private Informations upon Oath, and concealing the Informer's Name when there's no juſt cauſe of declaring it*) being any way oppoſite to the deſign of this *Act*, and 'tis evident on the contrary that it highly tends to promote the great end of it.

But ſince there are ſeveral *Objections* rais'd againſt it, I ſhall briefly conſider the moſt material I have yet met with.

1. Some alledg, *That 'tis contrary to natural Juſtice and Equity, and to the courſe of the Law in other caſes, that a man ſhou'd be con-*

victed and puniſht for a Crime, without having his Accuſer brought face to face, at leaſt without ſo much as knowing who he is.

Anſw. This *Objection* cou'd indeed admit of no Reply, if the Accuſed perſon, even when he complains of being wrong'd, cou'd no way know, who his Accuſer is, and were debarr'd from the priviledg both of *defending* his Innocence and *proſecuting* the Accuſer. But I ſuppoſe there is no ſuch thing practis'd. For no *Juſtices of the Peace* deny any perſon the knowledg of the Informer's Name, if the perſon accus'd inſiſt upon his Innocence, and engage to proſecute the Informer for Perjury in what he has ſwore againſt him. But if the perſon accus'd deſire to know the Informer's Name upon any other Terms, 'Tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he deſires it only to have the opportunity of Executing his private Revenge upon him. At leaſt there is no juſt Cauſe to diſcover the Informer's Name unleſs the accuſed perſon ſolemnly declare (and if required do it upon Oath) that he knows the Information to be falſe, and in that caſe I ſuppoſe no *Juſtice of Peace* will conceal the Informer's Name, nor any *honeſt Informer* deſire it.

Others *object, That this method of private Informations expoſes a Man to the malice of any who will but venture to perjure themſelves to do him a miſchief. And it ſeems to give Encouragment to ſuch malice, when perſons may hope to give in falſe Informations undiſcover'd.*

Anſw. 'Tis not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that any Man will perjure himſelf in order to the convicting another, when he can thereby do him ſo very little Injury. And this is the more unlikely ever to happen, when ſuch a falſe Informer runs ſo great hazard of being found guilty of perjury and being ſeverely puniſh't for it. For there is no Man that is conſcious of his own Innocence but wou'd proſecute ſuch a perjur'd perſon to the utmoſt, and if he engage to do ſo, he may know his Name.

If it be reply'd, *That if a falſe Informer poſitively perſiſt in his Accuſation and the perſon accus'd have no Witneſs or other Evidence to oppoſe thereto, he ſeems left without Remedy.*

To this I need only anſwer, this *Objection* concerns the *Act* it ſelf, and not this *particular manner* of executing it. The *Law-makers* for the more effectual ſuppreſſion of theſe Vices have made

made the *Information upon Oath of one witneſs*, ſufficient to convict an *Offender*, becauſe they ſuppos'd no man wou'd falſly upon Oath accuſe another of ſuch a Crime that has no hope to reap any advantage from the Penalty. Eſpecially when a *perjur'd Informer* runs ſo great hazard of being detected, as will in all probability deter him from this dangerous way of executing ſo poor a Revenge; ſince his Perjury can expoſe the accuſed perſon to very ſmall dammage in compariſon of the Puniſhment he runs the risk of, if the Accuſer ſhou'd clear his Innocence.

Others *object, That this way of clandeſtine Informations is very unfair and diſhonourable. 'Tis like ſtabbing a man behind his back. Whereas the Informer ſhou'd in civility firſt caution the Offender, and try what a gentle admonition will do, before he uſe this rougher method of reforming him. At leaſt he ſhou'd have the courage to avow what he does, and not do it in ſo ſneaking and clandeſtine a way.*

Anſw. 1. If the *Informer* be well acquainted with the *Offendor* it may be very adviſable firſt to try this gentler way of *Admonition* and *Reproof*.

2. But as this *Act* is chiefly deſign'd for the reclaiming of *Common Swearers*, and 'tis thoſe generally that fall under the Laſh of it, ſo it may be reaſonably preſum'd, that ſuch are paſt the hope of being reform'd by meer good Advice, and are ſenſible of no other Argument but what touches their Intereſt; And the Law gives e'm ſufficient warning of the danger they run in reſpect of that by theſe crimes.

3. 'Tis not becauſe *Informers* are aſham'd of what they do, that they deſire to paſs undiſcover'd, but becauſe they wou'd obviate ſeveral Inconveniences that ſuch diſcovery of their Names wou'd occaſion to the real diſadvantage of the *Act* it ſelf, as well as to their own particular prejudice. (Of which I ſhall have occaſion to make ſome mention in what follows.)

And as I can diſcern no ſolid weight in theſe *Objections* againſt *concealing the Informers Name*, ſo on the other hand, 'tis undeniably evident that this method is every way moſt conducive to attain the deſign of the *Act* by the entire ſuppreſſion of theſe abominable Vices. For

1. *This method will greatly encourage thoſe to give in Informations who are truly acted therein by meer Zeal for the honour of Almighty God, and the Intereſt of true Piety.*

For as ſuch will be very careful to give in none but *true* Informations, of which the accuſed perſons may eaſily upon reflexion be conſcious to themſelves; ſo they will be under no Temptation to be diſheartned from their duty by the *fear* of Revenge or ill will, when they know that thoſe they accuſe cannot learn their Names without obliging themſelves to proſecute them for Perjury, which they may well ſuppoſe they'l never attempt when incapable of proving it.

2. *The diſcovery of the Informer's Name will be attended with great Inconveniences to him, to the obſtructing the deſign of the Act, without any real conſiderable advantage to the Party accuſed.*

If the *Informer's* Name be *conſtantly diſcover'd*, he is thereby needleſly expoſ'd to the Malice and Revenge of the *Offender*, to whom he intends thereby a real ſervice. So that in all probability he will make the moſt of thoſe he convicts, his *Enemys*; however he do truly herein act the part of a ſincere *Friend* to them. And no doubt the proſpect of this will greatly diſcourage many from doing their duty, and render others too ſlack and cold in it. And if once *Informations* be diſcourag'd, The Terror of the penalty will be over, and the *Act* gradually loſe it's force, and theſe Inſolent ſinners as daringly outbrave the *Law of Man* as they have hitherto done the *Law of God*. So that we may ſoon expect that theſe pernicious vices will like a Torrent, that has broke down a weak Digue, return upon us with a more irreſiſtible violence.

And theſe Inconveniences to the *Informer* are attended with no real conſiderable advantage to the *Accuſed Party*; unleſs we take it for an advantage that by diſcouraging Informations, theſe Offenders may ſin with greater hope of Impunity. (Which is the very miſchief which the Act is deſign'd to obviate). For if the *Information be true*, what is the *Offender* the better for knowing who gives it? He may thereby indeed underſtand whom to level his ſpite againſt; Or he may know whoſe company he ſhou'd ſhun or

ſtand

ſtand on his guard in; and ſo prevent a new Conviction by taking care to ſwear only in ſuch company where he may do it ſafely But *if the Information be falſe*, the *perſon accuſed* is not deny'd the ſatisfaction of knowing whom to proſecute as perjur'd for giving it, if he will engage to do it.

I ſhall only add, that I hope what I have here ſuggeſted will not tempt the *Swearers* and *Curſers* of the Age to conclude, that if this method of *private Informations* were lay'd aſide, they ſhou'd go unpuniſht. For I doubt not they will find ſo many inſpir'd with Zeal in ſo juſt a Cauſe, as will ſoon convince them, theſe Vices ſhall not eſcape the penalty of the Law for want of *open Informations*. However ſome timorous and lukewarm perſons may decline their duty, there are others that are more juſtly afraid of being acceſſary to their guilt by concealing it and conniving at it.

Upon the whole, If now both *Magiſtrates and private perſons* wou'd but heartily join their Endeavours; the *latter* by faithfully giving, and the *former* by prudent encouraging and countenancing *Informations*, We may hope to ſee theſe crying *Impietys* of the Age effectually *ſuppreſs't*, that have been ſo long the ſcandal and bane of our holy Religion, and the fruitful ſource of our publick Calamity's. Whereas if *Magiſtrates* diſcourage and frown upon *Informers*, and their Zeal decline in giving Evidence againſt *Offenders*, we may juſtly fear theſe hainous *provocations* will revive, and riſe to as deſperate a height as ever, and in deſpite of the Law reign as uncontrol'd as before. And what can we reaſonably conclude from thence, but that ſuch renewed *profanation of the holy Name* and *defiance of the terrible Juſtice of Almighty God*, will draw down heavyer Judgments upon us then we have yet felt. For the *Juſtice of God* will not always be *out dar'd* by the *Wickedneſs* of *Men*. But if they are *incorrigible* in *Sinning*, he will be *inexorable* in *Puniſhing*. For (to apply to our ſelves the remarkable words of that pious Reformer *Ezra* 9. 13, 14.) *If after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds and our great treſpaſs (wherein God has yet puniſh't us far leſs then our Iniquitys deſerv'd) and after ſo glo-*

rious a deliverance as this we shou'd again break his commands, What cou'd we look for but that a righteous God wou'd be angry with us, till he have consum'd us, so that there shou'd be no remnant nor escaping. For in this case our publick sins wou'd be attended with two of the highest aggravations we can well conceive, an Insolent *Contempt* of God's *terrible Judgments*, and the vilest *ingratitude* for as *remarkable Favours* as were ever bestow'd by Heaven upon an unworthy People.

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FINIS.